



**UNITED STATES ELECTION
ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**

**ORAL TESTIMONY
OF
COMMISSIONER GRACIA HILLMAN

BEFORE THE

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS**

TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2008

***U.S. Election Assistance Commission
1225 New York Ave., NW – Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005***



Good morning Chairman Berman, Vice Chair Bohac, and Members of the Committee. My name is Gracia Hillman. I am pleased to be here on behalf of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission to discuss poll workers.

I believe you have before you a copy of my full written testimony. We also have submitted copies of EAC publications that serve as tools to help State and local election officials with their efforts to recruit, train and retain poll workers. I ask that these publications be entered into the record.

Since 2003, approximately four billion dollars in Help America Vote Act funding has been provided directly to the States. This funding is to help improve the administration of Federal elections, including the voter's access to the ballot. It is critically important that State legislatures understand the complexities of the Help America Vote Act of 2002. I thank this committee for holding this hearing.

Mr. Chairman, it is exciting but no surprise to see record high voter turnout during this Presidential primary season. It is also no surprise to see that there have been a few problems at the polls. Voting is a human exercise and it is human error that is the source of most problems.

Two remedies to help reduce the chances of errors are adequate compensation and vigorous training of poll workers. To assist in improving overall poll worker service, EAC has developed several guidebooks. These manuals have been distributed to State and local election officials throughout the country. We have published Successful Practices for Poll Worker Recruitment, Training and Retention. We also have A Guidebook for Recruiting College Poll Workers, A Compendium of State Poll Worker Requirements, and two Quick Start Management Guides.

These publications can also be used by community, advocacy and educational organizations to gain an understanding of the nuts and bolts of poll worker service. All information produced by EAC is available on our website at www.eac.gov.

Mr. Chairman, to put today's hearing into perspective, it is important to remember that on any Election Day, polling place operations are conducted by poll workers. We estimate that election officials train more than 1.4 million citizens every two years to help conduct Federal elections but our system needs more workers.

Election officials also point out that there are not enough volunteers to allow targeted assignments of poll workers based on experience and skill. And, the numbers also suggest that fewer people return to poll worker service each year. To help correct these problems, we need businesses, community groups, educational institutions and other



government agencies to help recruit poll workers as an ongoing part of their community service.

Yet, Mr. Chairman, election officials cannot let recruitment challenges prevent them from assembling a diverse pool of poll workers. The Help America Vote Act mandates that individuals with disabilities be able to vote privately and independently. To help meet this requirement, EAC has published an Accessibility Preparations Check List, which can be a useful tool for poll workers.

Additionally, the Voting Rights Act mandates accessibility for voters with alternative language needs. EAC's poll worker guidebooks address these needs as well. Also available is information on how to design polling place and ballot materials in several languages. We must also acknowledge illiteracy in America. Accommodations should be provided to all voters who have limited proficiency in the English language. Taking all of this into consideration, poll workers who directly reflect the electorate will enhance the voting experience.

It goes without saying that poll workers provide an important community service. They are our "Champions of Democracy." They deserve the very best training and work environment that can be provided.

In summary, conducting accurate, accessible, and secure elections is key to ensuring public confidence in our electoral system. EAC exists to help States achieve these goals by providing resources and information. Embedded in these goals is service to the voters, who are best served by a well trained and highly skilled work force that is dedicated to the franchise.

Thank you again for examining the important role that poll workers play in the election process. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission and I look forward to your questions.

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